

**FISHES OF THE LOWER SUSQUEHANNA and tributaries of the  
Northern Chesapeake, Part III**

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This series began in the Oct 86 AC and was continued in the Mar-Apr 87 issue. It is designed to cover all species the authors have encountered in the area, and to aid in location, identification, and maintenance of the species. The series is proceeding in conventional phylogenetic order (per the Atlas).

RIVER CHUB (*Nocomis micropogon*)

The River Chub (*Nocomis micropogon*) is probably abundant in all the larger, high-gradient tributaries of the Susquehanna and the river itself. The West Branch of the Octoraro Creek (Lanc. Cy., Pa.), for instance, has a rather high gradient, and a rock- to gravel-littered bottom. Muddy Creek about a mile west of the Susquehanna (York Cy., Pa.) is a considerably wider stream with an average depth of about 18". It has a high gradient with a similar bottom, but, in the riffle areas, many of the rocks are carpeted with Fontinalis-like aquatic vegetation. If the rocks are flipped, River Chubs will rush into a net held on the downstream side. This may be the only way of catching River Chubs in fast water with a small net like the 4'x4' seine the authors use (legal maximum with Pa. fishing license).

In view of the fish's obvious large-stream preference, one of the authors (BG, with Lawrence Page) this past November was surprised to find a large one in a deep pool under a bridge over an otherwise tiny stream. The pool is only about 35' from the stream's junction with a larger though shallow stream, however, and there is deeper water 50 yds. further away. All this was in the Big Elk Creek system near Oxford, Chester Cy., Pa.

In Little Gunpowder Falls\* at Rt. 7, which divides Harford and Baltimore Counties, Md., an autumn collecting trip (BG, with John Eccleston) found small (to 2") River Chubs the most common fish in pools adjacent to rapid areas. (See "Three Tributaries of the Northwestern Chesapeake," Bruce Gebhardt, AC 9/85, 14). Many were distinguished by unusually dark horizontal stripes against brown backs and white bellies. The stripes tend to be less obvious with growth, but sometimes small fish don't show much of one, and sometimes big ones do. Larger ones, even lacking stripes, are often surprisingly attractive when lying in the net, their light-green to subtle-yellow a

pleasing combination, particularly on a bright, sunny day. Large males sometimes have orange fins.

Often River Chubs can be seen, usually as little more than a blur, darting up and down the stream, frequently in company with Creek Chubs (*Semotilus atromaculatus*), Blacknose Dace (*Rhinichthys atratulus*), and White Suckers (*Catostomus commersoni*).

River Chubs are nest-builders, as excellently described by William O. McLarney in "Fish-watching in the Little Tennessee River, N.C.," AC, 5/85, 12. Males use their mouths to transport the many stones required. Their need for powerful jaw muscles may explain their relatively prominent heads.

In the aquarium, River Chubs do well, though they tend to remain shy for the first couple of weeks. They eventually become very much at home, however. Happily, they tend to get along well with their tankmates, even smaller fish. They are undemanding feeders that take dry flake food readily. Their 5-6" adult length means awkwardness in smaller tanks; nevertheless, their placid tank behavior, ease of care, and pleasing pastel shades make River Chubs welcome additions to larger native-fish aquaria.

\*The Big Gunpowder and Little Gunpowder Falls are the names of entire large, rapid creeks.

-WME

#### GOLDEN SHINER (*Notemigonus crysoleucas*)

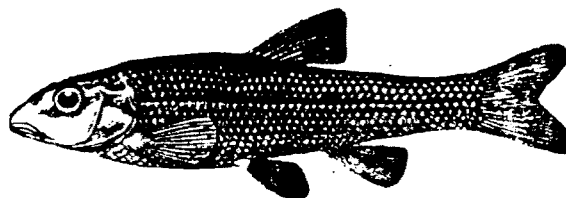
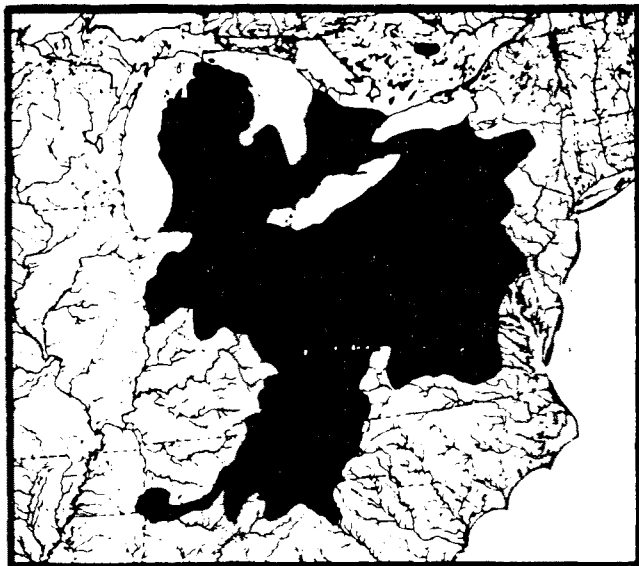
Within the lower Susquehanna area, we have as yet only found this fish, so widely distributed on this continent, only in Muddy Run, Lancaster County, Pa. Most of these fish were found in the shallow, mud-bottomed portions of this stream where there is practically no current and *Elodea* grows profusely. We have also taken this fish in the stream's deeper sections, where there is a clay bottom, a moderate current, and no vegetation. Occasionally taken in the same netful are Common Shiners (*Notropis cornutus*), Creek Chubs (*Semotilus atromaculatus*), and either Spotfin or Satinfish Shiners (*N. spilopterus*/*N. analostanus*) or both.

Despite its common name, it usually is a silver fish in this stream, with no hint of yellow or gold, and it is easily confused with the other species. Larger specimens than we have seen may be more likely to show gold. Nevertheless, it can be quickly distinguished by the rather abrupt angle that begins just at the vent and ends at the posterior end of the anal; also by the "falcate" shape of the anal fin; i.e., its outer edge is concave. Additionally, the Golden Shiner is more strongly compressed

laterally and is much deeper-bodied than the other cyprinids found with it. While collecting, I (WME) have never been able to locate satisfactorily the ventral keel that is the definitive identifying characteristic of this fish.

As an aquarium fish, the Golden Shiner is a welcome addition--peaceful and easily cared for. It does well on frozen foods such as brine shrimp and bloodworms, and readily takes flake foods. It is always on the move and is not restricted to any stratum in the aquarium.

--WME



The River Chub &  
its range (from Atlas)

The ubiquitous  
Golden Shiner  
(from Atlas)

